

For Immediate Release
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Senate Completes "First Steps for '06"

Majority Leader and Speaker encourage governor to sign the bills

Lansing - The state Senate today completed work on the "First Steps for '06" - the initial four agenda items announced by House and Senate Republican leaders just over two weeks ago.

"This is an excellent example of focusing on critical changes needed for our state and expediting those changes," said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. "Two weeks ago we said we wanted to send a strong signal to businesses that we are serious about making Michigan the place they want and need to be. I encourage the governor to sign this legislation now and help us amplify that message around the world."

The legislation headed for the governor's desk includes:

- Senate Bill 957, which reduces taxes for small businesses by lowering the alternative rate they pay on the Single Business Tax - a modest slice of the budget could cut taxes in half for more than 30,000 Michigan job providers.
- Senate Bill 956, which places \$116 million of state revenue left over from 2005 in the state's Rainy Day Fund - money that can only be spent once and, therefore, should be tucked away until all priorities are examined and the money can be spent wisely.
- House Bill 5447, which prohibits onerous ergonomic standards for businesses - unreasonable standards above and beyond what the federal government and other states are doing, thereby making Michigan a less-attractive state in which to do business. Congress overturned such standards at the federal level in 2001 and voters in the state of Washington repealed their state's standards in 2003.
- House Bills 4244, 5355-5364 and 5386, which provide businesses with assistance in dealing with the state Treasury bureaucracy - a bureaucracy business owners often complain about because of its size and inefficiency.

"It was crucial that we start 2006 with a strong message to residents and job providers that we are serious about tackling the many challenges facing our state," said House Speaker Craig DeRoche, R-Novi. "We have gotten back to the basics our economy needs: tax and regulatory relief for small businesses and fiscal responsibility. I strongly encourage the Governor to join us in letting everyone know we are working hard for Michigan's recovery."

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